A Southern Christmas Eve.

'Twas Christmas Eve in a Southern town,
The air was soft and sweet,
And the sinking sun looked lightly down
On the gay and crowded street,
While roses and violets blooming near,
Made my little girl say,
"Is it Christmas here?

"At home the snow is on the ground,
The air is cold and clear,
And greens and holly are hung around
To keep the Christmas cheer.
How can St. Nicholas come in his sleigh,
If all the snow is melted away?

"What will he do with his big fur coat,
The icicles on his hair?
The tinkling bells won't sound a note
With no Jack Frost in the air.
Twould be just folly, O, mother dear,
To hang up my stocking--no Christmas here."

"But," I said; "I see the Christmas star,
High in these Southern skies,
And the Christmas light is streaming far
And shines in the people's eyes.
I'm sure St. Nick will find the way
Without Jack Frost and the reindeer sleigh."

Early my little girl went to bed,
That the night might shorter seem;
And scarce had she pillowed her curly head,
Than she dreamed a beautiful dream;
And wondrous music seemed to bear
A message of joy on the balmy air.

Nearer and nearer it seemed to come,
Sweeter and sweeter it grew,
Till the Christmas light was in the room
And the Christmas glory, too;
While the angels' song rang from the sky,
"All glory be to God on high!

"All glory be to God on high,
And peace, good-will on earth!"
Thus joyous rose the angels' cry
To hail our Saviour's birth;
And e'er the radiance passed away,
The light had dawned on Christmas day.

A SORRY CHRISTMAS.

"A merry Christmas and a happy New Year, sir!" said Dame Sparlit to Robert Dyson, minister of Redlands, as he passed her cottage on his way to the Manse. "Doubt but you'll have busy times at the church this week. Miss D'Almaine's a rare one at decoration. It did look that beautiful last year, you couldn't think!"

"Yes, we begin them to-morrow, dame," laughed the young clergyman; "and all work under Miss D'Almaine's orders. She declares this year shall excel the last. A merry Christmas and a happy New Year!" he repeated, as he proceeded on his road. "Surely, if any man is certain of that, I am."

And the Reverend Robert Dyson whistled a secular air below his breath. Indeed, he was remarkably happy; and but for his cloth, was light-hearted enough to have liked to join the youngsters skating on the pond, their joyous, free-from-care shouts that echoed in the clear, frosty air, harmonizing with his humor.

Robert Dyson had reason for his happiness. Not only did he love, but he had been accepted by Helen D'Almaine, and their marriage was to take place the early part of the New Year.

His whistling, there being no one to condemn it as unclerical, continued until, crossing the churchyard, he reached the small gate leading into the Manse garden. Then he stopped, for he perceived a man leaning over it—a fair, far from ill-looking man, but with furtive, shifty eyes, and with, taken altogether, a very poverty-stricken appearance.

On beholding him, Robert Dyson halted, darkly frowning, and exclaiming, in startled, angry tones, "What, you here again?"

"Yes," replied the other, fronting round, and laughing easily; "like the proverbial bad penny, I am sure to turn up. How are you, Bob? I called at the house, and found you weren't in."

"What right had you to call? What do you want?"

"What a question after these years of experience! Money! I want two hundred and fifty dollars to save me——"

"Stop! Do not trouble to utter falsehoods for excuse!" broke in Robert Dyson, sternly. "When I gave you the last, I vowed never to yield again to your extortion. I value my word and shall not break it."

"You know the consequences?"

"Perfectly, and accept them. I was an idiot ever to pay you for silence."

"Really!" laughed the other. "Do you fancy, then, the world has grown more generous since you did so? I hear you are going to be spliced. What will Miss D'Almaine say to a husband whose father——"

"Yours, not mine!" broke in Robert Dyson. "My poor deceived mother's husband, but not my father. No blood of his flows in my veins. Yes, I am going to wed Miss D'Almaine; but do not imagine I do so with such a secret hidden from her, and she knowing, the whole world may know. You see, John Buchanan, your power is gone—all is over between us."

As he spoke, he moved toward the gate. The other stepped back with a peculiar expression in his countenance; but when the minister was about to pass through, he caught his arm, detaining him, while he said:

"Do you mean this, Robert Dyson? Have a care!"

"I mean it!" was the firm response.

"Be wise. Give me the two hundred and fifty this once. You are rich; I am poor."

"There are both poorer and more honest in this village. To give to them would be a charity; to give to you, a sin, for it would go to be lost, or enable you to cheat others at the green-cloth. Never! You have my answer. I will not give you another shilling!"

"You will repent it!" remarked the other, through his teeth.

Robert Dyson slightly shrugged his shoulders, and went on.

"Very well," exclaimed John Buchanan, leaning over the gate. "Go; but before the week is out, Bob Dyson, you shall curse this day—shall wish that you had given me a thousand instead of fifty; but then it will be too late. My father was a forger, was he?—but you were not his son. No; but I know more than that—so shall all Redlands. Wait!"

What did he mean? Involuntarily Robert Dyson halted, half a mind to go back. Tut! it was but a threat. Had not this man, his dead mother's stepson, used such for years? Now was the time to make a firm stand and cast this incubus from him. Reaching the house, the minister looked round. John Buchanan had disappeared.

Before two days were over, Robert Dyson had ceased to remember the visit. He had far pleasanter matters to think about. The fine old church was to be decked in green in honor of Christmas. A whole carload of boughs had come from the Manor, with heaps of hothouse flowers, and many were the fair hands enrolled under pretty Helen D'Almaine's orders to make garlands and bouquets, which a band of eager male volunteers, headed by Robert Dyson, waited to nail and fasten up.

"Did you ever see the holly fuller of berries?" laughed Helen, gayly, to the minister; "That's the clear, beautiful weather we have had. It makes everything more beautiful!"

"Everything that is capable of being rendered more so," he retorted, with an ardent glance.

"Don't be absurd, Robert," she answered, gayly. "I do not like compliments, you know."

"Then, Helen, it is your fault, for you are the only woman I have ever complimented."

"And you are eight-and-twenty," she laughed. Yet, with scarlet curiosity not uncommon to her sex, who are loved. "Do you really, actually mean, Robert, that you never cared for anyone—just even a tiny little bit—before you met me? Now"—stopping him, jestingly, with upraised finger—"be careful how you answer. Remember, you are on your oath!"

"Oh, in that case," he rejoined, smiling, "I must confess that, some fifteen years or so ago, I had a strong fancy for a certain young lady in frocks, with pink cheeks and golden hair; also for another golden-haired inamorata who was old enough to be my mother. I always loved golden hair, Helen. Are you jealous?"

"Not of those two, and I am too busy to catechise you more closely at present. Pray hold this branch, I want to tie these flowers in it. Dear, how slowly we get on. There's the front to be done yet; and"—looking up toward the windows—"evening is already upon us."

They were busily occupied—Rose at the edge, Helen at the foot, when their attention was attracted by an exclamation of surprise uttered by Robert Dyson. Advancing with some branches of laurel, he had stopped abruptly, and was gazing fixedly toward the entrance. The girls naturally looked in the same direction, and became equally interested by what they beheld.

The large ruby-red curtain vailing the church entrance was being held back, apparently by a small child between three and four years old. The pure snow without, made dazzling by moonlight, formed a background to the tiny, graceful little figure. One small hand rested on the curtain, the other held a poor, furred hood and cape about her shoulders, while from a shower of golden hair, a pretty, baby face, with large blue eyes peeped forth.

"Gracious! what little winter fairy is this, the little darling?" cried Helen D'Almaine.

At the sound of her voice the child turned; then, extending her small arms, ran a few steps toward Robert Dyson, exclaiming, "Papa, papa, Meenie is so cold, and so is mamma!" Then, timidly she stopped, meeting no response.

Helen D'Almaine looked at her lover, who was gazing at the child, and advancing, said, "My darling, who are you—who do you want?"

"I'm Meenie; and mamma sent me in for him—for papa."

"Child, I am not your father," said Robert Dyson.

"Surely, Robert, you have not the hardness of heart to disown your own offspring?" broke in a female voice; and glancing up they saw, standing in the doorway, a woman.

She was neatly clad, but quite insufficiently for the inclement season. Once pretty, her features were now meagre and pinched, while tresses of sunny golden hair fell about her shoulders.

"My offspring!" ejaculated Robert Dyson, indignantly. "Never have I seen you or this child before. What do you mean, woman? Who are you?"

"Who am I?" repeated the woman, sadly, entering and drawing the child to her. "You ask that? Ah! What matters it to you if we starve and die, while you live in comfort?" P'raps I ought not to have come like this, but I was driven to despair. I thought the sight of her might move you. Don't—don't cast us off!" And bending over the child, the woman sobbed bitterly.

Robert Dyson was white to the lips, which were sternly set. The church decorators had gathered near, surprised, scandalized, curious.

Helen D'Almaine moved forward.

"Woman," said she, "who are you?"

"The lawful wife of this child's father. Ask Robert Dyson if he dare deny it."

"All that this woman says is utterly false!' exclaimed Robert Dyson, rousing himself and stepping forward, calm but stern. "I swear it by the sacred edifice in which we stand! This is a plot to bring disgrace and trouble upon me; but I know well who has formed it, and on him the punishment shall fall. Gregson,"—turning to the verger—"run to the village—tell the constable I need him. This woman must be arrested."

"I will prove all that I have said, Robert Dyson," said the woman, quietly. "You are a courageous man, and meet it bravely. Well, I can save the officer the trouble of coming. I am going to the 'Blue Bell;' you can send him there. Come, my poor pet." And nestling the golden head of the child on her shoulder, the woman passed out, carrying the sympathy of all with her.

Robert Dyson's brain whirled, and was dazed by the enormity and suddenness of the accusation.

Recovering himself, conquering his agitation, he said, quietly.

"I feel that my simple denial, save to those who know and can trust me"—and he glanced toward Helen D'Almaine, who stood, her head averted, leaning against a pew—"will be but waste of words. But the confession shall be made as publicly as the charge has been. I shall not rest till I have seen to that."

"No one came forward or spoke to him. All looks were averted. Robert Dyson got his hat and walked to the door. By Helen D'Almaine he stopped.

"Helen," he said, in a low tone, "you know me—you, I hope, trust me—you do not believe this?"

She paused a second, then looking up, she answered, holding forth her hand:

"No, Robert, I cannot! But here are others you must satisfy—my father—before I can be your wife. This mystery must be removed."

"It shall be!" he rejoined, fervently, and hastened from the church.

Rapidly he walked over the snow to the little town. The first step he saw to be taken was to secure the woman, John Buchanan's accomplice. The question was, had she really gone to the "Blue Bell," or had she, which was not probable, taken to flight?

He proceeded to the inn. Yes, the woman had just stepped out for a moment again.

Then she would return?

Oh, certainly; for she had left her little girl.

"See, sir," said the smiling landlady, lifting a shawl from two chairs, "isn't she the prettiest love you ever saw?"

Robert Dyson gazed in silence at Meenie, rosily flushed with sleep, and, without a word, quitted the room.

"The woman has fled, leaving the child here," he reflected. "She must be found." And he proceeded to the police station to lay information. As he went, a parishioner wished him the season's greeting.

"A merry Christmas for me," he muttered, with a bitter laugh. "And yet how few hours ago I deemed it would be the happiest and best! So it might had I given that scoundrel the money he wanted. But, no," resolutely; "I am glad I did not. I will brave him, and John Buchanan at a court of justice shall crave my mercy, not I his."

But the finding of John Buchanan and the woman proved no easy task. Both had disappeared.

Robert Dyson put the matter in the hands of a detective; but with no immediate result.

Meanwhile, the little forlorn, abandoned waif, "Meenie," remained at the inn.

What was to be done with the child? The good-natured landlady decided.

A bit and sup couldn't be much for such a mite. She would take care of it until matters were arranged, when, perhaps, she might be rewarded for her trouble by them to whom the little thing belonged. In her own mind she referred to Robert Dyson. Redlands was divided in its opinion regarding him. If only for the sake of opposition and argument, people always do divide.

As to the minister himself, he had not only told his story—how his mother, a rather weak, vain, pretty woman, had inveigled, to her misery, into a marriage with a scoundrel, while he, Robert, was at Cambridge—to Helen D'Almaine and her father, but he let it be known to all Redlands, also, how foolishly he had paid John Buchanan to keep silence, having nervous dread of disgrace, and also of that last meeting at the Manse gate, with John Buchanan's threats.

Mr. D'Almaine said he saw no reason to disbelieve Robert Dyson's story; yet, the charge made against him was a daring and dangerous one for even an enemy to make, and until everything was satisfactorily made clear to the public, he could not consent to receive Robert Dyson as previously, much less as Helen's affianced husband.

The minister's position was bitter to bear. Those who once had been friends turned cold; and even those who showed no outward change, he knew mistrusted him in their hearts, while he became an object of curious interest and gossip to the poorer classes.

More than once John Buchanan's words had come true. He wished he had given him the money. But it was but a momentary weakness.

"No!" he exclaimed, firmly. "Whatever comes, I'll live it down. It is I, not he, who shall conquer."

So the days went by. Christmas Eve came. Robert Dyson passed it alone. He had had invitations, but refused them. How could he be gay with this dark cloud about him? A cloud which, if he could not disperse it, must separate him from Helen.

Christmas morning dawned. The heavy snowfall had melted, a wild wind blew over the land, but the sky was clear and bright.

For the first time since the event, Robert Dyson ascended the pulpit. His glance round showed many seats vacant. There were those who had judged and condemned him already. He bit his lip. Then, abruptly, he put aside the sermon he had prepared, and, fronting the congregation, calmly gave out the text, "Judge not, lest ye be judged."

It was an impromptu sermon. Coming from his heart, it touched the hearts of others, but it exhausted Robert Dyson. Reaching the vestry, he dropped into a seat, his head bowed on his hands.

"The fight is too difficult," he moaned. "I must succumb; I cannot bear it!"

He waited until the groups that lingered in the churchyard to talk over the startling and powerful sermon had gone, then went to his solitary Christmas dinner at the Manse. He had but one consolation. Helen had met his glance from the D'Almaine pew with a bright, encouraging smile.

Never was day more dreary to Robert Dyson, who had reckoned upon its being the merriest. While it was light he remained at home, not caring to meet men's glances; but when the early winter night set in, he wandered forth, too restless, too wretched to remain longer still.

He involuntarily bent his steps to the Manor. Entering the grounds by a private gate, he proceeded through the trees until he came in front of the house.

From every window issued rays of light; figures passed and repassed the blinds of the lower rooms. Occasionally, strains of music reached him.

But for John Buchanan he might have been there—there with Helen, his betrothed, who now, he knew, mourned in her heart as did he. But for John Buchanan!

Robert Dyson, throwing up his arms, in his bitter indignation, cursed him. Then, after a space, maddened by being so near Helen, yet unable to join her, he tore himself from the spot, and wandered across the fields.

He had not observed, as he quitted the Manor grounds, a man emerge from the shadow and follow him. Apparently, he had the intention of overtaking the other, only the latter walked too fast.

Nevertheless, now and again puffing at a cigar, the man kept on his track.

Where was Robert Dyson going? Would he turn soon? It was a wild night for a walk.

Abruptly, the minister, reaching the bank of the river, stopped, gazing into the whirling waters.

The other by a few quick strides was by his side.

"Well, Bob Dyson," he remarked, lightly, "what do you say now? Have I kept my word?"

The minister leaped at the other.

"Villain!" he exclaimed. "I have you now! You shall not escape!"

"Not quite. See, I am prepared!" And stepping back, he presented a small pistol.

"Coward! But I will summon aid."

"Difficult to find it here, I reckon. Tut, tut! Listen to reason. I have come to give you a last chance. Five hundred dollars and I clear your character. I'll confess the plot."

"Not a dollar!" was the resolute response.

"I give you five minutes."

"I do not require one. I refuse. I leave all to time."

"Then let time clear you, idiot!" said John Buchanan.

Robert Dyson saw him turn and walk up the river bank. Should he call him back? Never! He would be free of this man, at least. He watched him turn at the narrow rustic bridge, and glance back. Robert Dayson made no sign. He saw him step upon it, then—all was rapid as in a dream. The bridge, undermined already by the swollen water, yielded beneath his weight. A wild cry, then bridge and man were whirling in the river together.

Just one moment Robert Dyson paused. The next he had sprung down the bank, and seizing an over-hanging tree, leaned far over the waters. If he could catch John Buchanan as he passed, he might save him. It was his only chance.

Here he came, helpless, whirled here and there. Ah, too far! No, no! he had seized his arm. The bridge and the waters rushed on, but Robert Dyson had saved his enemy.

* * * * *

"The spine is injured; he can live but a brief space."

It was the doctor who spoke, after examining John Buchanan, who was lying on a couch in the manor library.

"I hear you, doctor," said the dying man, "I know it. But a few minutes will suffice to clear the innocent. Bob, you are a brave, good fellow. I bid all here know that the charge made against Robert Dyson is false. The woman was my own wife; it was my own child. Don't let people blame poor Carrie. I forced her to say what she did out of revenge, and to extort money from him. In return, he risked his life to save mine. It is not his fault I die. I am sorry for what I did, Bob. As I said, I am a bad penny; but I shan't turn up again. Can you forgive me?"

Robert Dyson pressed his hand.

"Thanks, Bob. Stay; will you be a friend to my poor, innocent little Meenie?"

"I will."

"Thank you. You—you may have a merry Christmas yet. Mine—is ended."

It was; for with the words the soul took flight.

The revulsion from misery to joy made, after all, that Christmas the merriest to the young minister, who passed it by the side of Helen D'Almaine, his betrothed.

Years of prosperity and happiness have ensued, but they cannot quite efface from Robert Dyson's memory the suffering of that one Christmas day.

Grandmother Gray.

Faded and fair, in her old arm chair,
Sunset gilding her thin white hair,
Silently knitting sits Grandmother Gray;
While I on my elbows beside her lean,
And tell what wonderful things I mean
To have, and to do, if I can some day;
You can talk so to Grandmother Gray—
She doesn't laugh nor send you away.

I see, as I look from the window-seat,
A house there yonder across the street,
With a fine French roof and a frescoed hall;
The deep bay windows are full of flowers,
They've a clock of bronze that chimes the hours,
And a fountain—I hear it tinkle and fall
When the doors are open: "I mean," I say
"To live in a house like that some day."

"Money will do it," says Grandmother Gray.
"There's a low barouche, all green and gold,
And a pair of horses as black as jet,
I've seen driven by; and before I am old,
A turnout like that I hope to get.
How they prance and shine in their harness gay
What fun 'twould be if they ran away!"
"Money will buy them," says Grandmother Gray.

"To-morrow, I know, a great ship sails
Out of port and across the sea;
Oh to feel in my face the ocean gales,
And the salt waves dancing under me!
In the old, far lands of legend and lay
I long to roam—and I shall some day."
"Money will do it," says Grandmother Gray.

"And when, like me, you are old," says she,
"And getting and going are done with, dear,
What then, do you think, will the one thing be
You will wish and need to content you here?"
"Oh, when in my chair I have to stay,
Love, you see, will content me," I say.
"That money won't buy," says Grandmother Gray.

A DOG STORY.

Finding His Way Home Under Strange Circumstances.

A curious and interesting experiment has been tried to ascertain the faculty by which animals find their way back to familiar places after being removed to long distances. In order to prevent any knowledge that might be obtained by the direction or other conditions, a dog was placed under the influence of chloroform, put in charge of a conductor on a night train, and sent from Cincinnati to Somerset, Ky., a distance of 160 miles. The conductor reports that on the way the dog slept soundly, except an occasional groan like a "Christian in a whisky fit." In the early twilight of the morning after the start, while the train was taking on wood at a side track eighteen miles from Somerset, he escaped from the caboose and started off in a "dazed sort of way," but when pursued "gathered himself up" and disappeared across a meadow. Thirty-eight hours afterward he made his appearance in Cincinnati, having passed over the distance of 142 miles. Sometime afterward the same dog was put under the influence of ether and his nose bandaged to prevent the use of his scent faculty. He was then placed in a wicker basket, and putting him upon an elevated train he was taken southwest to Danville Junction, east to Crab Orchard, then northeast to a hunting rendezvous near Berea. Here he was kept in a wood-shed and closely confined over night. The next morning he was taken out on the farm and turned loose. He immediately started for home—not by the way he had come but in a bee-line for Cincinnati. He had no appearance of being lost, but with head erect pushed forward as if he knew the way perfectly. He crossed two broad rivers and steep mountain ranges, and had to pass by or through five towns, the centers of a bewildering net-work of roads and by-roads. He had never been in that part of the country before, nor within sixty miles of Berea. The wind was not from the direction of Cincinnati when he took his course, and yet four days afterward he came to his master on the streets of Cincinnati, water-soaked and full of burs. Now, the question is, what induced the dog to walk due north? It could not have been memory, for there was nothing to remember, and it does not seem possible that it could have been scent, for all the conditions were unfavorable.

BACKWOODS JOLLITY.

A Christmas Day in One of the Back Counties of Missouri.

It used to be the saying in the army: "When a soldier is riding a hoss, and the hoss plays, the soldier is played."

When my mule played out after an all-day's ride through a Missouri snowstorm, I dropped off into snow a foot deep and more coming, and felt a bit discouraged.

It was in a back county, if there are any back counties in that state, and the settlers had located their cabins just six miles apart to a rod. When I set out to walk and pull the mule to boot, he looked up at the sky, around at the woods, and keeled over in despair. I was trudging along in the snow over my boot tops, and thinking how much easier it was to drown than to freeze to death, when the sound of a fiddle reached me between the snow-flakes, and I discovered I had reached a six-mile cabin.

"Come in, old hoss!" sang out a voice, as I fell against the door.

When I opened it I was in a room about sixteen feet square—the only one in the house. The big fire-place gave light, and the furniture was home-made. A gaunt, long-haired pioneer sat on a shake-down bed playing the fiddle; a gaunt, slim woman was dancing in the center of the floor, and several children were scattered around as spectators.

"Keep it up, old woman—'deevning, stranger—be through in a minit; find a cheer. Go in for all yer worth, Mary!" called the fiddler, as I shut the door behind me.

As I walked to the fire one of the children wheeled up a block of wood, and the father remarked:

"Powerful storm outside, stranger—keep them feet gwine, old lady—you children wipe off yer mouths and sing with me:

"I was forty miles from Pike,
And the road was full of snow,
And the wind was getting ready
Fur to hump itself and blow."

"Faster now—change off higher—up with them hoofs—round with ye—hoe 'er down—ladies change—that's all—stranger, howdy!"

I was made at home.

"Wall, now, but this seems to be the hand of Providence," said the old man, as I drew up to the table. Here ye are, snowed in, and here we are chuck-full of perishuns and happiness, and to morrer is Christmas. Stranger, I'll show ye more high steps, more hoots and yells, more music, and feasting and dancin' and gittin' up sta'rs to-morrer than ye ever saw in all yer born days! Ole woman, if this hain't the Lord's doin's then I'm a petrified reptile and never got religion."

"Ben, yer right," added the wife, as she poured out another cup of burnt-corn coffee. "We is a hos-pit-able family. When we can't whoop'er up fur a stranger on Thanksgiving or Christmas or New Year's, nobody else need try."

After supper one of the boys took the fiddle, and the rest of the family limbered up for Christmas. When this process was ended it was time to go to bed, and the old man said:

"Now, then, ye kin see that we hain't bilin' rich. Here's two beds, and nine of us. Me and the old woman take one, you take t'other, and if the children cant keep warm afore the fire, I'll liven their blood with a gad. Git right into bed, stranger, and if the children git to fightin' in the night heave yer boots at 'em!"

If the children got into a row, I didn't hear them. It didn't seem as if I had slept an hour, when the pioneer shook me by the shoulder and called out:

"Say, stranger, daylight has arrove, and Christmas am here. Git up and prepar to jine in the festivities."

The snow was four feet deep and still coming, but the prospect delighted my host, who cracked his heels together and exclaimed:

"If this hain't Divine Providence biled down, then I don't like coon and corn. You children, stop that quarreling! Thomas Jefferson, did you forget to say yer prayers? If you did, I'll whop ye like blazes!"

We had coon meat, corn-dodgers, apple sauce and coffee for breakfast. Seats were found for the pioneer and myself, and the mother and children stood up. There was a long and embarrassing pause after we we were all ready, and finally the man said:

"Stranger, I was givin' ye a chance to throw yerself on a blessin', but ye didn't tumble. Old woman, reel off sunthin' putty!"

She closed her eyes and uttered the following as if she had repeated it a thousand times: "Now I lay me down to sleep, and bless this meat and bread and sass. We are thankful for what we've got, and not jealous of our betters. Keep us in good health, make coons plenty, and cause us to escape the itch and measles. Amen!"

When the table had been cleared away, the pioneer and wife held a consultation in a corner, and when it ended the man approached and asked: "Stranger, are ye willin' to help us mak this a whoopin' old day?"

"Yes."

"Good! As a family, we are 99 per cent. on a rough-and-tumble. I'm about twice yer size and heft, and it wouldn't be a fair show, but the old woman is a pretty even match, and she's just achin' to lay ye on yer back!"

"But I never wrestled with a woman in my life."

"Well, it's a good time to begin. She's wiry and quick, and she'll lay ye if she can. Stand right up, stranger, and do yer level best, to oblige me."

I obliged. The situation was new and novel, and in twenty seconds I was thrown over one of the shake-downs with a crash that jarred the house. The woman cracked her heels together, and crowed lustily, the children laughed, and the pioneer helped me up with the exclamation:

"Stranger, she's practiced this fur ten years, and she'll down any man in this county 'cept me. I knowed how it would be, but am much obleeged for your great kindness. The hull family will now swarm for their paternal dad."

I retreated to a corner, and the old woman and her six children made a rush for the father. They were seven to one. They attacked him on all sides with great vigor, and were picked up and flung ten feet without being a bit discouraged. They finally got him foul and brought him down, and as he lay on his back he observed:

"Children, ye may well feel proud over this. It shows that ye are healthy and full o' pluck, and that the itch has no business in a family like this."

We had hickory nuts, pop-corn, cider and apples for lunch, and at dinner we had bear meat, pumpkin pie, roast woodchuck, apple butter and gingerbread. After the meal a half tame bear, about a year old, was brought in, the floor cleared, and a grand hugging match took place. The old woman led off. Standing face to face with the cub, he hugged and squeezed. It was hip-and-tuck. She sighed and coughed, and he growled and strained, but at last he whined, in token that his ribs could stand no more. Then the two big boys tackled him; but Bruin laid them both out.

After the bear we had a jumping match, in which the old woman beat the crowd. Then followed a target-shoot, in which every one beat me. Then the bear and the dog had a bout, and the dog was used up. In the evening we had a dance, played old sledge and drank hot cider; and as we got ready for bed the old woman read seven or eight lines from a battered Bible, and the man knelt known in all seriousness and prayed:

"This 'ere day has drawed to a close, and we are one peg nigher to the grave. A stranger cum along and we took him in. We've fed on the fat of the land, had a bustin' old time, and expect to sleep like a load of brick. Keep us from growin' pizen mean, continue our whoopin' good health, and reserve plenty of room in heaven for us all. That's about all, unless ye want to put it into the mind of the stranger to offer me his watch even up for my old mule. Amen!"

M. QUAD.

The Doctor's Visit.

A Christmas Incident.

"Oh, Millie, do go for the doctor, that's a dear; Arabella has met with a frightful accident, and I'm afraid she'll die."

"Oh, go along with your fooling. I've no time to bother with you," said Millie.

"But you don't know how bad Arabella is."

"Botheration take you, and Arabella, too," was Millie's unfeeling reply.

Now, this conversation seems very heartless on the part of Millie. She was the housemaid in the service of Mr. Pendleton, in Laurelville, and the childish entreaty for the doctor was made by little Cora Pendleton, whose years as yet scarcely numbered ten.

Arabella was only a doll, and in taking her down from the closet, Cora had let her fall, and one of her legs had come off. It was not an expensive doll, and Cora had other and finer ones, but with the strange faculty so often noticed in older persons, Cora liked poor common Arabella far more than all her more magnificent companions.

Of course, the fact that Arabella was only wood, muslin and sawdust did not render it any the less necessary that she should have a doctor who could set the broken leg for her, and so when Millie, the housemaid, refused to bring a proper surgeon, Cora in her perplexity turned to her brother Ralph, two years he senior, for aid. After hearing her explanations, Ralph said:

"Never mind, Cora, I'll be the doctor."

So Cora seated herself on a stool, and holding Arabella in her lap, awaited the doctor's visit. Soon there came a rap at the door. Ralph had got an old hat and long-tailed coat, and carried a bottle filled with some colored liquid, and having a paper label attached to the cork.

"Good morning, madam," said he, politely. "My office-boy states that you desired to see me."

"Yes; my little girl Arabella has met with a great accident."

"Allow me to see the child," said Ralph, in his gravest tone.

He took up Arabella, carefully inspected the broken leg, and then with a profound seriousness said:

"Ah! It is a compound fracture of the berrecellum."

Ralph had got things slightly mixed, but we can excuse him.

"I have some liniment here which will cure her, however."

The liniment was simply soluble glue, and Ralph very quickly fixed up the walking apparatus of poor Arabella.

"Now, madam, she'll do nicely. My fee will be one hundred dollars."

We see that Ralph had already learned the true spirit of a surgeon, and charged a good high fee for a few minutes' work.

Cora drew out some pieces of paper from her pocket, paid the doctor, who with a polite bow soon departed, and when he reappeared it was in his own proper capacity as simple Ralph Pendleton.

Wake, O my soul, and hail the morn,
For unto us a Saviour's born;
See how the angels wing their way
To usher in the glorious day.

"Come, join the angels in the sky;
Glory to God who reigns on high;
Let peace and love on earth abound,
While time revolves and years roll round!"

Christmas Decoration.

While this beautiful assurance that the adorning of His house is an acceptable offering to the Lord, let us not fail at the Christmas season, when we commemorate His birth, to do our utmost to beautify the place of His sanctuary, and to honor Him in our homes.

The most beautiful of all Christmas decorations are twined evergreens; but this takes so much material and so much time that it is not always attainable. Next best for churches are branches of evergreen trees, with holly, ivy, and laurel formed into stars, crosses, triangles and wreaths. The cross should not be too prominent, but should be seen dimly through the boughs; for the star is the fittest Christmas emblem; it is then just before us, while, as yet, the cross is far away. For home, pressed ferns, autumn leaves, and bitter sweet make pretty trimmings; and here is a curious looking ornament: Take a newspaper and crush it up into a ball. Then cover it with gray, hanging moss, fastening the moss with black thread. Leave one end of the thread about twelve inches long to hang it up by. Stick in small pieces of holly until the moss ball is covered, and when finished hang it up between the folding doors. Autumn leaves and ferns may of course be used instead of holly.

Ivy leaves that are used for decoration are improved by oiling. The new way of dipping them in melted paraffine makes them exceedingly pretty at first, but they soon wilt. A good imitation of snow may be made by dipping cedar boughs in water, dredging them over with flour, and allowing them to dry. Some prefer to put cotton wool loosely over the branches, and perhaps this looks more like real snow than the flour; but it is more dangerous on Christmas greens where candles are used. Plants in pots, well-arranged on the mantel-shelf, with wax-candles placed here and there through them, make a beautiful effect.

Let us give gladly of our best to glorify God on Christmas Day, and out of our abundance, or out of our little, let us spare a few boughs, a handful of flowers, a bunch of leaves, or a single bit of holly to cheer some other home that may be less bright than our own.

A Christmas Carol.

Oh, the rain, the beautiful rain,
Falling alike on hill, dale and plain;
Over the turnip-tops, taters and leeks,
Over the butchers' carts all full of meats—
Pouring,
Whirling,
Rushing along,
Beautiful rain! coming down so strong.
Rubbing the paint off a lady's cheek,
Making her give an inward shriek—
Beautiful rain from the heavens above—
Come out of it, quick, or you'll catch cold, my love!

Oh, the rain, the beautiful rain!
Dashing against the window-pane,
Coming down in its drenching fun;
It soaks the pedestrians every one,
Wheezing,
Sneezing,
Coughing by—
It moistens the nose and bungs up the eyes,
And even the ducks with a quack and a bound,
Dash into puddles from the dusty ground;
The people are rushing to catch the train,
To get out of the damp of the "beautiful rain."

How the will crowd goes swearing along
Because they left their umbrellas at home;
How the gay "Grecian benders" like meteors flash by,
Drenched to the skin; but, between you and I,
They ain't singing,
Nor swinging,
But dragging their train
Over dirty pavements soaked with rain—
Rain so pure when it falls from the sky
Right into big water butts by and by;
And the youngsters are whacked for getting wet feet,
Or playing with boats in the horrible street.

Once I went out in the rain, and I fell—
Like the rain drops—into a well;
Fell to be cramped in my stomach, my feet,
Fell several feet, till I felt dead beat—
Bleeding,
Swimming,
Heaving a sigh,
(Only I couldn't be heard, by the by.)
I'd have given my head for a morsel of bread
For I feared my friends thought me "rain dead;"
Messrs. Moses & Sons I thought of in vain,
For a waterproof overcoat to keep out the rain;
Once I went to a fair—in the beautiful rain—
And made love to a girl, in a shady lane,
And kissed her, I did, and her name was "Grace."
And for it I got a slap in the face.
Father,
Mother,
Sisters, all
Said I deserved it, as much as my fall!
And I felt like some wretch that goes shivering by,
Or a very small sweep in a chimney high;
For all that was on or about me 'twas plain,
There was nothing—that had not been soaked by the rain.

It is not at all strange that this beautiful rain
Should fall on several sinners, both handsome and plain.
It is not at all strange, when the night comes again,
If it should rain quite as hard on my desperate brain,
Panting,
Ringing wet,
Drying—alone.
Quite too wet for prayer. Two weeks for my moan,
That can't be heard in the splash of the crazy town:
Gone mad in its joy at the rain coming down;
While I lie in my night-gown made of muslin delaine,
Cosily tucked up in bed—out of the "beautiful rain."

Marie Antoinette.

Marie Antoinette, the beautiful and unfortunate queen of Louis XVI. of France, was the youngest daughter of Francis I., Emperor of Germany. Her mother was the famous Maria Theresa. She was born at Vienna, November 2, 1755. At the age of fourteen she was betrothed to the dauphin, young Louis, and a year later they were married at Versailles. The weak, wicked King Louis XV., died in 1774, and when the news reached the young couple, they both flung themselves on their knees, exclaiming, "O God, protect us, direct us, we are too young."

Light-hearted, fond of pleasure, banquets, and fine dress, indifferent to public opinion and blind to the actual misery of France, the young queen grew daily more and more unpopular. Her enemies increased the popular dislike of her by circulating false charges against her.

She was unfortunate in her choice of those whom she made her personal friends, and through whose exertions her influence in affairs of state was often exerted most disastrously, as she was neither fitted nor inclined to take part in the government. At the outbreak of the Revolution she was the particular object of the hatred of the mobs of Paris.

In October, 1789, a mob attacked the palace of Versailles, broke into the castle, murdered several of the bodyguard, and forced themselves into the queen's apartment, and she narrowly escaped with her life. When questioned by the officers of justice as to what she had seen on that memorable day, she replied: "I have seen all, I have heard all, I have forgotten all."

She was with the king in his flight and capture in 1791, and from this time her conduct became heroic, and she endured with heroic courage the insults which fell thicker and faster upon the royal family. In August, 1792, she was separated from her family and confined in the Temple. On the 21st of January, 1793, the king was guillotined. The dauphin, Charles Louis, born in 1785, was put in the hands of a brutal cobbler, one Simon, who did everything in his power to degrade and brutalize the innocent child, and whose ill-usage caused his death in 1.95. On the 2nd of August, 1793, she was removed to a damp, cold cell in the Conciergerie, and October 14, she was brought to her trial. When all the infamous charges against her had been read, and she was asked if she had anything to say, she nobly replied: "I was a queen, and you took away my crown; a wife and you killed my husband; a mother and you deprived me of my children. My blood alone remains, take it, but do not make me suffer long."

She was condemned to death at four o'clock on the morning of October 16th, and at half-past twelve of the same day she was beheaded. Though but thirty-seven years of age her intense sufferings had whitened her hair, and her bitter tears had nearly deprived her of sight. Calmly and heroically the queen went to her death, knelt in prayer a few moments upon the scaffold, and then wrote with her blood her name upon the pages of history, as one of the most noble victims of the brutal passions of mob violence the world has ever seen.